

Hebrews - Commentaries by Walter Potter

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 23 (10:1-25)

The Will of God, the Work of His Son, the Testimony of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 10:1-25

Hebrews 10:1-25: This is a rich portion from the Word of God. What was God doing there in the days of old with that people of His, before His Son came? What did that tabernacle mean? What did that redemption from Egypt mean? What did God mean in bringing them through the Red Sea, through the wilderness, through the land, giving them the tabernacle for its sacrifices, and continuing with them after they had gotten into the land? What was God doing there? He was shadowing forth. And there is very little perhaps one might say, almost nothing, in all that economy that has not a typical bearing—God foreshadowing His Son. Ever and anon, it is Christ and His work.

Christ is the key to the Old Testament as well as the New. As a passage in 2 Corinthians says, "Now where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Spirit of the Old Testament is the shadowing forth of Christ. It is only when the Christian gets to see those things' symbolizing and typifying by it, that the Old Testament becomes interesting to him.

The Old Testament, in a measure, is otherwise a dry book, but when one gets the Spirit of Christ in it, it becomes just the opposite. From that wonderful tabernacle and those various sacrifices the Christian gathers rich fruit in what God was typifying. What is God typifying now? What is God shadowing forth now, since redemption is accomplished and the Redeemer has gone to heaven? Nothing. The days of types and shadows are gone; He had fulfilled its mission, and now it is not type and shadow, but eternal realities. In Hebrews we find again and again that word, "eternal." And that is in contrast in this book with what is temporal. So God is dealing in eternal realities now. God is speaking of eternal realities. What is before you as a sinner, and what is before another as a saint, before you both, saint and sinner, is eternal.

He says here, "The law having a shadow of good things to come,"—and they have come. It was a shadow; it was not an image. Some of them were very sweet in types, but still they were not an image; they were not perfect. There is another thing found in this Epistle, and that is "perfected."

Just by way of introducing to us our chapter, there are three things especially in this chapter to which one would call attention: the will of God, the work of His Son, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is very important to remember those three things when reading the book of Hebrews.

This scripture has a precious place in our hearts; it is a solemn thing. Are not those three things blessed and solemn? It is a great thing, and the Christian loves to dwell on it, that the source of all his blessing as a Christian, now and to come, is the will of God. The source is the will of God.

Let us refer to the 2nd chapter of this Epistle: that by the grace of God He should taste death for everyone. The grace of God and the death of Christ are two wonderful things. There is food for meditation in those two things. The grace of God is the source of all blessing. What is the channel through which the blessing reaches us? Of course, it is the death of His Son. Before the death of His Son, the blessing was all there treasured in the heart of God, but it could not flow forth. There was something in the way of His blessing in the fulness of His nature. It is God's nature to bless; He delights to bless, but all that, as it were, was barred. There was a barrier that kept it from flowing forth, and that barrier was S-I-N. The thing to bring about was first of all to take away sin.

The Israelites had all these sacrifices; all had divine origin. All those sacrifices which Israel had, had their origin in God Himself, and they offered them in obedience to His Word. It was impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin. Sin stood in the way. It does not stand in the way now; the barrier has been removed. We ask when, and by what? It was when the Saviour died. The Saviour's death, as brought before us in Matthew 27 signifies: "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom . . ." It tells that sin had been atoned for. In the gospel of Matthew, God is making heaven, earth, and death respond to the power of the death of Christ. Above, the whole veil of the temple was rent, and below, the earth did quake, the rocks rent. That was the most solid part of the earth, but it was overwhelmed by His death. The graves were opened, and many of the saints came out of their graves after His resurrection. The death of Christ did that.

In the thoughts of God, and in the thoughts of His people there is nothing like that death and never can be. All God's rich blessing had been treasured up, but sin stood there in spite of those sacrifices for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin.

Sometimes the will of God is spoken of in its absolute character, sometimes, in the desire. "God who will have all men to be saved"—that is not its absolute character, but that is the desire of God, to get all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

Here we find that that Will had a desire to have a sanctified people, which means a people set apart to Himself, a people that He can connect His Name with, and not only connect His Name with, but find His joy in—a people that He can love, not as He loves the poor sinner, with pity and compassion, but that He can delight in, having set them apart. And how does He accomplish that? All are sinners. How is He going to separate people unto Himself? God's people are always a separated people, according to their calling, both Israel and the church. Take, for example, the first command to Israel: "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). They are a separated and sanctified people. How is He going to come to a world full of sinners and set apart a people for Himself—for that is what He wants to do, and that is what He has done. "By the which will (that is the source here of the believer's sanctification) we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once" God has a sanctified, a separated people, that are set apart to Himself on the ground

of the sacrifice of Christ.

Sanctification is spoken of in different ways in Scripture, but it always means separation. Sometimes it is spoken of, as in our chapter, as an accomplished thing, and that accomplished thing is a perfect sanctification. When it says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification . . ." that is what we call progressive, growing sanctification. In the former it is classified as meaning absolute sanctification, having its source in the will of God, and it is myself, the work of Christ. It is positional sanctification. Progressive sanctification is growing more and more in the knowledge of God and like Christ.

The sanctification spoken of here is absolute, perfected forever, and there the believer stands answering to the will of God in His eyes sanctified and brought into the place in all the infinite merits and worth of the work of Christ. "By the which will we are sanctified . . ."—perfected forever—that is, accomplished, and in the perfection of it, the sanctified one stands. In it he rejoices. He thinks with an adoring heart, of the source of that sanctification—the will of God and the sacrifice of Christ.

If those sacrifices originated with the heart of God, why not offer for sin? That is the argument in this chapter: ". . . There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Our sins have been atoned for, met their desert. If they had not been atoned for, God would tell you to offer sacrifices for sin. Will the Saviour ever be on the cross again? Suppose that such a thing were possible, it would tell that that one offering was not sufficient. What a glorious truth it is that our blessed Saviour will never have to die for us again. All our sins are atoned for. There is no more sacrifice for sins. Because the Lord made that one sacrifice, there is no more sacrifice for sins for the Christian, but there is happy, holy remembrance of that one sacrifice, and there is now nothing as a veil before God.

There are two ordinances for Christians: baptism and the remembrance of the Lord's supper. There is no value in either to atone for sin, but they tell that sin has been atoned for. Both of those ordinances speak of death, the death of Christ. Thus we can see why God is not now sacrificing for sin. God is bringing in now a rich, eternal blessing. Type and shadow are gone. As it says in another epistle, we have not the type nor the shadow, but the substance (Col. 2:17).

Why is it that the one offering of Christ could do what all those many many offerings of the Jews could never do? By "that one offering," of course, we mean the atoning work of the cross. Why is it? Think who it was who died a sacrifice for sins. It is that which gives value to what He did, then of the sacrifice when He said, "Lo, I come ..." Who could that be, volunteering Himself to do that which all those sacrifices had failed to do? Who was that? Whose voice can we hear saying, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God"? Think for a moment. Who was it? Ah, that was the Son of God, One at liberty and competent to do what He volunteered to do, One who fully knew what it would be to undertake to put away sin. His estimating what that would be, estimating so justly what it would be, was an evidence of His fitness to atone for it.

What was the Lord Jesus doing in the Garden of Gethsemane when He agonized in prayer, sweating as it were, great drops of blood? Atoning for sin? No, what then? He was realizing what it would mean to drink the cup of death from the hand of God; and all that agony, those tears, as we read in Hebrews, came from the depths of His soul. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." That tells very blessedly that God could look upon that One, and did look down upon Him, and realize: "Ah, there is One who estimates sin according to its true nature in My sight." Some do not understand Gethsemane in that way at all. There He weighs and anticipates going through all in communion with God. There is another party there, that is Satan, who was pressing upon the blessed Lord what it would mean to drink the cup of death from God's hand. Why did Satan do that? Just for this: Satan knew that if he could get the blessed Saviour to refuse that cup, sin was unatoned for. Atonement for sin was made on Calvary's cross, in the last three hours of Calvary's cross. So that is what the blessed Lord was doing there in Gethsemane. He was just anticipating. When a sinner is brought to repentance under the grace of God, he tastes just a little of what the Lord felt in Gethsemane perfectly. When a pious sinner is brought to realize himself in the presence of God, the terror in his soul is, in a small measure, the kind of terror that the Lord experienced in Gethsemane. But the Lord went on and bore the judgment. So when a poor sinner has learned rightly what sin is, it gives him a little taste. But there is One who bore all of what sin is.

One loves to put together, "cried with a loud voice" and "the veil of the temple was rent." Why was the veil of the temple rent? Was it rent for God in mercy to come out to poor sinners? No, God has done that in Christ. Well then, why was the veil rent? This very chapter tells us that the way into the holiest was made manifest by the blood of Jesus; that is, as it were, God is throwing open heaven for poor sinners. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith . . ." What do you think this means? A true heart fully assured by faith comes boldly, but with reverent boldness, and that is to give credit to the value of the blood of Christ. When God opened those heavens, the door of His house, in that way, that we might go into it according to all that He is in His nature, the way there is like this: God sits upon His throne, and He says, "Come near"—that is the Majesty of God. And so he who enters that Presence by the blood of Jesus, enters boldly. And the blessed God rejoices in the work that set Him at liberty to throw the heavens open in that way. When you and I get into heaven, we will go on the ground that Christ died and opened the way into the presence of God.

Where is Christ now? He is on the throne. There He is sitting in the presence of God. Why does it say, "From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool"? Why does He talk about His enemies, as making them His footstool? He means bringing them into subjection. He has nothing more to do for His friends. He is waiting and expecting to bring judgment upon His enemies, those who do not receive Him. (Dear unsaved one, not having received Christ as your Saviour, you, in your various characteristics as a sinner, take warning that you are an enemy of God and of Christ, and that Christ is going to execute judgment upon His enemies—all those are His enemies who have not received Him as their Saviour.)

Referring back to "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," it does not say, "Father" there, but it says, "God." There are other scriptures that tell us of the Father's will, but when Christ went to meet God on the cross about our sins, He did not go to meet Him as His Father. When He atoned for our sins before God, He atoned before God as such; for it is against God as such that we have sinned, and it is with God a sinner has to do. If you receive His Son as Saviour, you become His child; but if ever you have to meet Him about your sins, you will have to meet Him as God. "Every knee shall bow ... and every tongue shall confess to God." He found Himself having to do with God about sin. I think it is important to remember that. It was from the hand of God as God, the Saviour suffered for my sins upon the cross.

We think of the majesty and the glory—the personal majesty and glory—of the One who would volunteer Himself, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." He came and made atonement for sin. Now God has a sanctified people. If you are a believer on the Lord Jesus and the competency of His offering for sin, in short, if you are a child of God, you are numbered among His sanctified people; and God says that sanctification, that separation to Myself, is not according to your conduct, but according to the value of the work of My Son. I have something else to say to you about your ways, but that has to do with your conduct, but not here. Here all is judicial, that is, having to do with God as a Judge. We all have to do with God as a Judge the first time that we have to do with Him.

Preachers do not insist upon that enough. We may have to be a little critical sometimes, but we do see the necessity of making men see God as God. Increasingly, man is exalted in his own eyes, to his lasting and eternal ruin, and to the dishonor of God's Son and Himself and of the work of Christ. If the Lord delays the subduing of His enemies another two decades, the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin will well-nigh have gone from the earth as a doctrine, as a truth of God. People talk about "signs of the times," and they talk about Matthew 24 and part of 25, Matthew 13, Luke 21, and such scriptures, but they do not know about 2 Timothy 3. All those signs there have to do with an earthly people and in their primary aspect; the Christian has nothing to do with them. The signs that we have are the signs given in 2 Timothy 3. At the end of our portion here, we read, "So much the more as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10:25. It is the day of apostasy. Apostasy is the sin in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there is no remedy for sin for one who takes the place of being a Christian. If he falls into sin, there is no remedy for him. There is no provision in Hebrews for a believer sinning, and the only Epistle that does make provision for a believer sinning is the 1st Epistle of John. It shows how differently God looks at things.

One's heart sinks within him; we would not desire to occupy you with evil, but we grieve upon seeing that the sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is rapidly dropping from people's minds. In how many of these large churches here in the city of St. Louis, if we would attend tonight, would we hear someone say, "The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us from all sin"? We fear but few. We might get into some little outside meeting and hear some "nobody," as the people think, telling gladly that "The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us from all sin," and proclaiming loudly the need of atonement by death.

Then there is another sad condition. In several instances, that is, where the sacrifice of Christ is not denied, it is ignored. You can talk with people who take the ground of being Christians—one hopes they are—and they will talk and talk. Presently you will say, "What about the death of Christ? You never mentioned that until your attention was called to it; and the Word of God tells me you were telling out what was in your heart. 'For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Matthew 12:34. Now if you had been full of the sacrifice of Christ, you would have been talking about it, and you never mentioned it." That is very sad. Do not forget that this little index tells what is in the heart, and that it is the index of the heart, according to the Scriptures. Often we talk too much to people in place of letting them talk, and so we do not get a good diagnosis. Just let them talk some, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Then we can get a real diagnosis of their state of soul and know how to minister to it.

Perhaps this tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews has not its equal in all the Word of God as to the value of Christ. It goes on "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified"—perfected forever by one offering. Think of that mighty offering—perfected forever. What gave it value? It was Christ making the sacrifice. It was the Son of God making the sacrifice.

"Well might the sun in darkness hide: And shut its glory in, When the Incarnate Maker died."

O, the work that was in the sight of God—darkness over all the land, and alone—absolutely alone—in the darkness. No place in heaven or on earth but in a place between the two hung the Saviour. He hung there between heaven and earth—heaven over His head and earth beneath Him—alone, forsaken of God and of man. The only One who has ever known, or will know, so far as we get it from Scripture, what absolute abandonment is! He was alone between heaven and earth. The Son of God it was who was there. He who knew no sin was being made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. There is a verse in a hymn,

We sang that one sixty-five years ago, and when it comes to standing before God, the ground is the same:

"I stand upon His merit, I know no safer stand; Not e'en where glory dwelleth, In Immanuel's land."

Oh, the precious sacrifice of Christ! Thank God, there is One who can rightly estimate it, and that was the One to whom the sacrifice was made.

In the preceding chapter there are a few verses in contrast, not in comparison. He said, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer . . ." Those three offerings spoke in a special way of the one sacrifice. Here he quotes those verses:

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" It was "dead works" for the Jew, and wicked ones for the Gentile, but the conscience has been purged for both, and the believer is one who has a purged conscience. All sins have been atoned for from the judicial standpoint.

As we said just now, there was Christ on the cross between heaven and earth; now He is in heaven, in the value of what He did, not simply on account of His own Person, but in the value of what He did for God's glory here on earth. Before He came here, He was there as God's coequal. But He was not there as a representative in behalf of others. He was there in the glory and riches of His own Person; now He is there as the One who made atonement for sins, for the sinner's sins. He came to do the will of God. He did it, and God is glorified.

Now, what about the Holy Spirit? In verses 14 and 15 it says, "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a Witness . . ." There is One who came down, and came down to bear witness, and to tell of the value of His work, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a Witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. "

Perhaps we had better say a word here about "the new covenant." Of course, the believer is not under the new, nor under any covenant, but he gets one of the blessings of the new covenant. One of the blessings which he gets is the forgiveness of sins; that is a part of the new covenant. When the Jew gets the blessing of the new covenant and the forgiveness of sins, God will do something with his heart; He will put His laws into their minds and write them in their hearts, and then what a happy work it will be. Their sins and iniquities will He remember no more. God's laws will be put into their minds and written in their hearts—happy people!

Your sins and mine, dear Christian, are remembered no more. But is He looking to you to keep His law? No, He is looking to see Christ in you. As we learn from another scripture, all our sins are gone; now He looks to see the life of the One who did this for us.

The Holy Spirit is bearing witness to the value of the work of Christ. Here He says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." They are all gone, forgiven in the value of the work of Christ.

Our souls look back to see
The burden Thou didst bear,
When hanging on th'accursed tree,
For all our guilt was there.

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 24 (11:24-30)

Moses Refusing, Choosing, Esteeming and Forsaking Hebrews 11:24-30

This whole chapter brings the varied phases of faith before us, and here we have the "refusing, choosing, esteeming" of Moses—and the "forsaking."

"By faith Moses when he was come to years"—that is maturity. Some translate it "when he became of age"—gained his maturity—the forty years. "By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused." A very few of us have come to years as Christians. We remain as it were at a certain kind of childhood—infancy, that is spiritually. We get that referred to in Corinthians and in another part of this epistle. The apostle said to the Corinthians, "I...could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." There it is: babes in a sense of a state of weakness, or weakling. In the 5th chapter of Hebrews we read, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe."

There is a test as to how near we have come to our maturity, come to years. It is a simple test, a very trying one: "By faith, when he was come to years, refused." He refused "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He was brought up there in all the luxury and all the learning: "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." He has been in that house—that court—for forty years. He knew little or nothing outside of it. All at once he refuses, turns his back on the whole thing. He has come to years, and faith comes to years in that way, refuses in different ways, this poor world and all that it has to give. "Egypt" is the power of the world, and in that way we feel that it is a simple but searching test. Do we not feel our own infancy and the lack of coming to years?

The child of God should be continually growing. It says, "growing by the true knowledge of God" (JND Trans.). The actions of faith, or the path of faith, to the wisdom of this world is a very foolish thing. He would give up one thing and choose another. He gave up all that the world had to give; all that he was heir to as the son of Pharaoh's daughter! A child of the court of Egypt. What did he choose? That is very striking: "Rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." Now it may seem contradictory, a paradox, to say in one breath, as it were, a foolish, but wise course. You can hardly put those two things together. But from the standpoint of human wisdom what a foolish thing to give up the palatial home—that place in Pharaoh's court, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Here is a grown man now, able to enjoy it all, and he gave it up to identify himself with a suffering and afflicted people.

God was unknown in the court of Pharaoh. Whatever else might have been there, God was unknown in the court of Pharaoh. The Pharaoh of Genesis and the Pharaoh of Exodus are two different generations of Pharaohs morally. It says, "There arose another Pharaoh that knew not Joseph." In the time of Joseph, Egypt was friendly to the people of God, but in the time of Moses, Egypt was the oppressor of the people of God. They were an afflicted people, a nation of slaves. But faith never forms a wrong judgment whatever appearances might be. Faith is faith and always gets the mind of God.

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." One says, "Wise and happy choice." What is the portion of the people of God in this world? Affliction. The path of faith always has been and always will be, in this world, a path of difficulty. There is no faith in heaven, but God's people as His people are an afflicted people. Then the great thing to know is how far we are willing to make this path of faith a path of choice. That is what we are called to. "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." God's people, to our shame and loss, have become so identified with the world that we do not know the affliction that is our due from the hand of the world, if we were faithful to our calling. There is such joining of hand in hand with Christians and the world or the church and the world—walking together. The communion, the intercourse with God, the spiritual or godly intelligence that should characterize us as the children of God is unknown in that path of walking hand in hand with the world, but it takes energy to make this choice. That is why we said at the opening that so few of us have come to years in spiritual experience.

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy." He gave up enjoyment, and such enjoyment, enjoyment of the court of Pharaoh, that place of dignity—known and called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He gave it up, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction . . . than to enjoy the pleasures of"—WHAT? SIN. Naturally, we all, every one of us, love the pleasures of sin. They are pleasant. They last "FOR A SEASON"—and a very short season.

Just now some lines come to mind from the "Little Flock" hymn book before it was revised. That hymn is not in the book now; it was taken out in 1881. The hymn began:

Its evils in a moment end its joys as soon as they are past, but all the bliss to which I tend eternally will last."

How transient! "The pleasures of sin which are but for a season" are given up for a path of affliction, the normal path for the child of God through this world. We often see the poor world looking upon us with pity and saying, "You do not know what you are losing." The path of faith is to this world a path of folly, but at the same time, while the poor world pities us, or the children of this world pity us, we pity them, and we say, "You do not know what you are losing."

When the prodigal in the far country came to the end of his own resources, he found degradation for his position and calling, and he found husks for his food. And that is all that this poor world has to give us. We crave it, but after all, it proves to be husks.

Many years ago a little article appeared in a well-known publication of those days called, "Things New and Old." In it a servant of God was giving an address to the young, and he alluded to Nelson's Monument in Trafalgar Square; some of us have seen it. It is quite a monument. But come closer home and go to Washington's monument in Washington. That is a monument to Washington, is it not? Nelson's monument is a monument to Nelson, but where is Nelson? Where is Washington? They are monuments to dead men. The very fact that the world raised monuments to them is a pretty sure proof that they held a pretty good place in its esteem. On the other hand, it is just as sure a proof that they knew very little of identification with the people of God. They do not raise monuments to living people but to dead, and as we often say, these monuments are to those who are where the monuments are not. We just refer to this to show "the pleasures of sin which are for a season."

Who ever thought of raising a monument to St. Paul? Not one of those apostles came to a natural death so far as we know. What has changed things so? Has the truth changed? Has the character of the Christian's calling changed? What has changed then? The Christian has identified himself with the world. The church of God which bears God's Name—the Name of Christ in this world—has a marked place in it, a place it never would have had had there been faithfulness. What the Lord says in Luke 12 would have been characteristic of them: "Fear not, little flock." Is Christendom a "little flock"?

All this tells us that a vast majority of us have not come to years. We have not known what it is to choose the path of the people of God, which is a path of affliction. "Pleasures of sin for a season," and as we have already said, at the longest, it is a short season after all. If the Lord tarry, many of us will soon be gone, but what are seventy-nine or eighty years compared to eternity? That is the proper way to estimate. Look things squarely in the face, and that is what the wisdom of faith does and makes its choice. That is a striking verse from the pen, as it were, of the Spirit of God: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." When the Lord Jesus was about to leave the world, He left two things: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." It is not "Ye may have." Then He says, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you." There is a peace outside of all, peace in and through the tribulation. The apostle speaks to some young converts exhorting them that "through much tribulation ye must enter the kingdom of God." Why has the path of the children of God ceased to be a path of tribulation? It is because they got out of it. We all know it.

The next thing is, "Faith esteems." As we have said, Faith never makes a mistake. It is unbelief that makes mistakes. Esteeming what? "The reproach of Christ." That is a remarkable word: reproach of Christ. That is the character the Spirit of God gives to the suffering of the people of God, but that tells what the world is. We often say, to illustrate it, suppose you are on a train or streetcar, does it, or does it not take courage to take out your Testament and read it? If people see you reading your Bible on a streetcar or train, you are a marked man. That very fact isolates you. That all tells what the world is. You would not need courage to read your Bible in heaven, but you do here, and to confess the Name of Christ will bring reproach. It tells us what a difference there is between the earth and heaven—"Reproach of Christ." "They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake." We should take these things to ourselves. We almost envy some (it may be natural courage) in tract distribution. We know it takes courage on our part, but that all tells, don't you see, the difference between this world and heaven. In heaven there will be no such thing as bearing reproach for Christ's sake. It is impossible. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1 Peter 4:14).

We read, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." When the treasures of Egypt, and those who have possessed them have passed away, we will be enjoying the blessed and eternal result of having suffered reproach for Him.

Mr. Darby once remarked that the only man who is ashamed of his religion in this world is the man who has the true one. He said a Mohammedan will take his mat and drop down on his knees and pray. It is the Name of Christ that brings reproach. Who is ashamed to speak of President Lincoln or Grant in the company of the world? No one. It is an honor to be able to do so. But go into that same company and make mention of the Name of Christ. At once you feel you are out of place, and that Name has no place there. "The reproach of Christ." "If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ" 1 Peter 4:14. "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" John 15:20.

"For he had respect to the recompense of the reward." Faith looks on. Faith is wise. Faith says, "The pleasures of sin are for a season; the reward for the reproach of Christ is enduring." Notice the thought of that hymn of old Dr. Watts. "Ashamed of Jesus" is the beginning of each verse. How came Watts to write that hymn, "Ashamed of Jesus"? He felt it a little.

He felt the shame connected with it.

Notice verse 27: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." If we turn our backs on the world, we will get its wrath. Go on with it, seek to help it and improve it, and we will not. Take the place of a stranger or pilgrim just passing through. "Not fearing the wrath of the king." That is very striking, is it not? "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you... and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Is that not Matthew 5? "Shall put you out of their company" another passage says. If we are faithful to Christ, we will get the world's cold shoulder.

We might, just for a moment, refer to the last assembly addressed by the Lord, in the 3rd of Revelation. That is intensely solemn. So to speak, the Lord has just one thing to complain of, and that is He has the outside place. There it is Christian profession. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that

the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see . . . Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He is not knocking at a sinner's heart but at the heart of a Christless professor. It may even be the heart of a true Christian where the Lord has lost His place in the heart and affections. "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." It does not say, "I will save him," but "sup with him and he with me"—communion.

Another thing—a strange thing, too: "For he [Moses] endured" (it was not a momentary thing,) "he endured as seeing Him" (who cannot be seen) "who is invisible." Faith has to do with an Unseen One. "For he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." What can sustain us in this path of faith? We are enabled to endure by just having that One, "Whom having not seen we love," before us, "seeing Him who is invisible." We often say that the Christian is like the bee. The bee is a most wonderful little creature. It has two sets of eyes. One set it uses when it goes out and gathers the nectar from the flowers. There are no windows in the hive; it is all dark in there so it needs the other set when it goes in to put the nectar in place inside. So it is with the Christian. He not only has natural sight, but spiritual sight; has the eyes of faith. "The things which are seen (seen with the natural vision) are temporal" things. "The things which are not seen are eternal." "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." "Endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

Moses was a remarkable servant of the Lord. Faith led him to do and sustained him in it. Moses has been seen in glory with Christ since, and that is where enduring "as seeing Him who is invisible" will end, with all the children of faith—in glory with Christ. It is the reproach of Christ now; it will be in glory with Christ presently.

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 25 (11:32-40)

Notes on Readings on Hebrews 11:32-40

In this portion the apostle gives a kind of general summary. To give details of each would take a great deal of time and space. Thus he gives us five of the Judges and one King. Of course, we get their history in the historical books.

In general the path of faith always has been and always will be a path of suffering. Faith is something that the world knows nothing about. It goes on with the things which are seen and is little troubled or little exercised about the things which are not seen. It says the future will have to take care of itself: "I have not time for the future; I have all I can do to attend to the present." That is one snare of Satan. God is now continually calling attention to the unseen things. It says, "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." And God is speaking to men of that eternal future. But today, in a special way, all man's energy is absorbed with the present. It is a day of pressure in that way to keep abreast of the times in business, social life and in intellectual pursuits.

In the parable of the sower, the Lord gives us four kinds of ground upon which the seed falls: the wayside, stony ground, among thorns, and into good ground. Only one out of the four became fruitful. With some it is the cares of this life (that is always mentioned first) and they are many and heavy. With others it is the deceitfulness of riches; that is another thing. They are a deceitful thing. Then there is the lust of other things, springing up and choking the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. How well the blessed Lord, all those ages ago, depicted the truth as to the sowing of God's Word. God goes on sowing—speaking to man—and will till the day of grace closes.

The Lord tells us the character of the ground that receives the Word of God effectively: "In an honest and good heart"—uprightness before God—honesty before Him in the reception of His Word. That brings forth fruit, not always in the same proportion, "some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred," but where the Word of God is received in truth there is always fruit; it may be thirty, or sixty, or a hundredfold. Then there is another important thing: God is Judge of what is fruit. You and I might think such and such an one was bearing fruit an hundredfold and another one perhaps only thirty, while in God's sight that one might be bringing forth an hundredfold and the other only thirty.

What is acceptable to God is obedience to His truth. There may be often a great deal of outward energy, the flesh entering in a great deal but not submitting to the ways of God. Here is a saint bed-ridden year after year, and we are apt to think there is little opportunity for testimony or bringing fruit to God. But when the end comes, that one has borne more because there is submission to His will. I think just at this moment of one we know. We have known her now between thirty and thirty-five years ever since the affliction began with her (dreadful rheumatism). She is helpless now, but the poor dear soul seems to be submissive to God's ways with her. There is another in T. afflicted in the same way, but so far as we can see,

there is submission to the will of God. One of the poets has said, "They also serve, who only stand and wait."

Peter said to the Lord, "We have left all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" The Lord tells Peter that He will not be his debtor; but he will get an hundredfold. But at the end the Lord says, though He does not mention Peter, "They that are first shall be last, and the last first." There are a number who have left more than you have, Peter, and have not said a word about it. It is not really according to grace or love to be counting what we have given up for the Lord. What He enjoys is our realization of what He gave up for us. That is fruit. That is our true pride and joy.

So you see we get all these different cases: some of weakness, some of power. "Stopped the mouths of lions"—that is Daniel. "Quenched the violence of fire"—that is Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. "Women received their dead raised to life again"—that was the widow in 1 Kings 17 and the woman in 2 Kings 4.

Notice 1 Kings 17:17-24. In the 18th verse she blames God's servant, but God's hand was in it for the exercise and blessing of the poor woman.

In 2 Kings 4:8-37 is the account of the Shunammite's son. The Shunammite woman had received the child in answer to the prayer of Elisha, but he suffered a sun stroke. In the first part of the chapter we read that they had great possessions but no child. Those cases are very

instructive, the Lord exercising those great servants of His, both Elisha and Elijah, bringing them into the presence of death and making them to feel their helplessness, honored servants as they were. Contrast these with the Lord Jesus raising the dead. Notice how gradually it is done both by Elijah and Elisha. In the case of the Lord Jesus, "Maid, I say unto thee, Arise." That is all, and she sat and He commanded them to give her something to eat. He was no Elijah or Elisha. So to the young man on the way to the tomb, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." The dead sat up. Lazarus was in the tomb and the Lord said, "Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth." With these honored servants of God it was very different.

You know about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and you know about Daniel in the den of lions: "My God hath sent His angel and...shut the lions' mouths." You know about the victory of Jephthah, Gideon, Barak. All these examples of faith, both in suffering and power, are brought us to encourage those still in the path of faith.

Then there is another class that endured suffering and scourging, who did not get deliverance and did not give up, "Not accepting deliverance." We rather think from the 36th verse on we have the suffering of the Macabees; you know what suffering they went through.

Then we get another remarkable word, parenthetic too, in the 38th verse: "Of whom the world was not worthy." The world did not think them worthy of it, and God did not think the world worthy of them, "Of whom the world was not worthy." That is God's estimate of these outcast and suffering ones.

Nothing in general can be more directly opposed, diametrically opposed, than the thoughts of the world and the thoughts of God. "Of whom the world was not worthy." They hold on you see: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." They died in faith. Now what was the promise? Look at Hebrews 10:32: "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." Verses 9 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." What is that? The next verse tells us: "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." We get the patience and power of faith constantly and in different ways, patience in suffering, and so on.

Then we get the reason in the last verse of our chapter, and that is very remarkable. These worthies he speaks of, those of whom the world was not worthy, obtained a good report [record] by faith, but received not the promise, "God having provided [foreseen] some b-e-t-t-e-r thing for us." What is that? That is one of the incidental evidences why the apostle Paul wrote this epistle. The apostle Paul had the precious truth of the church, "that they without us should not be made perfect."

What is "perfect" there? They are gone to heaven, resting with the Lord long since, but they are not perfect. "Oh," you say, "can anything imperfect be in God's presence?" They are absent from the body and present with the Lord, but they are in what is called in another scripture in an "unclothed state," and "being made perfect" here is resurrection. When God made man, He did not make him without a body, and death is a thing that has come in by and by and separates a man from his body, strips him of his body, and there he is naked, without his body. Resurrection comes and all get perfection. Man is clothed again with his body, and clothed then, when resurrection comes, with a body that will never know death. He has a soul that will never die now; he has not yet a body that will never die. All this is developed and enlarged upon in another scripture.

"Not for that we would be unclothed," 2 Cor. 5:4. If death does come, it comes, and it is very blessed. It is "far better to depart and be with Christ," but it is not what we want. "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." That is what will take place in the resurrection, clothed with immortal and incorruptible bodies, spiritual bodies.

Is that the same as the celestial body? That passage in 1 Corinthians 15:39-44 is speaking of the sun, moon, and stars: "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another, There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory." What we have before us is in this 42nd verse: "So also is the resurrection of [from among] the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." We often read that at a burial. We lower the body into the grave; it is already going to decay. It is hidden in a mass of flowers and the fragrance is beautiful, but it is already going to decay. "Sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." Here it is the body raised. "It is sown a natural body," that is, this body. "It is raised a spiritual body."

What is a "spiritual body"? "The natural body" is this body sustained by natural life. We have a life in common with the lower creatures. The life of the ox and sheep is blood, and my life is blood, too—a body sustained in this natural way. The "spiritual" body is the same body raised from the dead but sustained by a spiritual life, not natural life. We have an idea that the spiritual body is immaterial; it is just as material as this one. Indeed it is the same. "Handle Me, and see;" the Lord said, "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have" (not flesh and blood).

What is the "sheaf of firstfruits" (Leviticus 23)? It is just a sample of what is to follow. So our chapter says, "Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

Take that passage we so often quote to one another: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God . . . Beloved, now are we the sons [children] of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (1 John 3). The relationship is there, and the "now" is in contrast with "shall be." One is present; the other is future. "But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." When they brought that sheaf, it was a type of Christ in resurrection and also of the harvest that is to follow. After the sheaf was presented, they went and gathered the harvest. That was presented nearly two thousand years ago. He has been gathering the harvest ever since.

What have we to show us that we will be known individually, that identity and personality are never lost? "Whose names are in the book of life." The apostle in speaking of the Thessalonians says, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" We will recognize those Thessalonians and those Philippians there as the fruit of his work. Then on

the mount of transfiguration where Peter, James and John are with the Lord, two men appear in glory and talked with Him, which were Moses and Elias, and Peter, James and John knew who they were. Peter says, "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

"Every man shall receive his own reward." Turn to 1 Corinthians 3:4, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" (vv. 6-13). "And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." It is not how much—not quantity, but quality. S-O-R-T does not spell quantity. It is all individual. Paul planted, Apollos watered. God will reward each according to his service.

What a mercy the judgment seat of Christ will be! There were Paul and Barnabas called to a special service and they were sent out by the Holy Ghost, as it says in Acts 13. A circumstance arises. They took John Mark when they first went out. He was their attendant to wait upon them. He got tired and went back. When they start out the second time, on more of a pastoral than an evangelistic tour, to see how their work was getting along, Barnabas wanted to take John along. "No," said Paul, "he went back before, got discouraged, gave up and went back to Jerusalem." Barnabas was so insistent, and Paul was so insistent; Barnabas said, "Yes," and Paul said, "No," and those two servants separated over that. At the judgment seat of Christ, don't you see, the whole thing will be reviewed in the Lord's presence, and Barnabas will see what led him was natural affection. John was his nephew. Alas! natural affection has led many a servant out of his path. But then national affection led Paul out of it, years later. He was determined to go to Jerusalem in spite of all the warnings. At last the brethren said, after they saw how determined he was, "The will of the Lord be done." If you must go, you go. He never was a free man afterwards; he was a prisoner the rest of his life. He was allowed to dwell two whole years in his own hired house. That was like being out under bond. That was because of national affection, his love for his nation. The day of Christ will reveal that.

The judgment seat of Christ is brought before us in the 49th of Genesis; look at it. Here is Jacob just about to pass away. For seventeen years we have not heard a word of him. He has been in Egypt, a retired man, not that active, bustling, never-still man. They have been years of reflection and meditation. There we get the fruit of the retirement of that busy man, that scheming man, before the end of his life. Now we hear him saying, "Gather yourselves together and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father." Then he goes over the history of the twelve. All is reviewed just as it will be at the judgment seat of Christ. Reading it over brings the judgment seat of Christ before us. The Lord will gather His people together and give to every man according to his work. And you will not be I, and I shall not be you. Every man will receive his own reward. That is so solemn. All that those sons have done is reviewed. No doubt we have in it the whole history of Israel until all ends in blessing under Joseph and Benjamin: Joseph the man of glory, rejected by his brethren, and Benjamin the man of power, son of his father's right hand, son of his mother's sorrow. Think what a moment it was for those sons of Jacob to gather themselves together before their aged father, then 147 years old. His eyes were dim. He begins with the firstborn, Reuben, but you have lost your place as firstborn, because of your conduct. Look at 1 Chronicles 5. We were very much impressed in going over it of late. "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel," ("Jacob" was his name in nature, "Israel" was his name in grace) "(for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.)" That is the first thing he has to tell his firstborn. He takes them back some thirty or forty years. Nothing is forgotten.

Nothing is forgotten. All is brought up in review and Simeon's and Levi's father's estimate is given. At the judgment seat of Christ all will be reviewed. Then we shall have such a sense of God's grace as we have never had before—the patient love that never turns aside. It not only sought us and brought us near, but held on to us in spite of our conduct; but it did not pass over our conduct as nothing. It is all reviewed.

Shall we consider Judah. Judah is the royal tribe line and there grace comes in. The 8th verse tells us the throne belongs to Judah. It did belong to Levi.

What a solemn moment that must have been when that aged father gathered those sons around him and just reviewed their whole history! 1 Corinthians 4: "Then shall every man have praise of God." God will own every little bit of good that He can.

Do we see what is meant by "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"? All will get resurrection, but when that comes, the church of God will have its own distinctive place. Sometimes we have illustrated it in this way: In a nation that mobilizes its army, every regiment knows its own place and standing and each takes its place in that standing. There are some regiments nearer to the sovereign than others, but each knows its place. So in resurrection each company will take its own place, and we shall not take our place with the Old Testament saints, but with the New; and these saints who died before the flood, when the resurrection comes, will not take their place with those who died after the flood. Saints before the flood and after the flood, before the Lord came and after, take their own place. All have the dealings of God with them.

Look at all the children in the school yard. The bell rings and we cannot see one. Each went to his own class. So when the shout comes—resurrection—each will take his own place. "Some better thing for us" is the nearest relationship to Christ. "That they without us should not be made perfect." They have been waiting long for resurrection. They will have to wait until the church is completed. Then resurrection comes, and all will get it together, but each takes his place in his own class. "Some better thing" is very striking. It is one of the verses that indicates that the apostle Paul wrote the Hebrews. But the important thing is not who wrote it, but what he wrote. In Hebrews 3:1 Christ Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. The apostle Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles.

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